No 11 #8

Jesse Young of Pennsylvania

On the Local Origin of Diseased action

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Of all the subjects which have engaged the attention of the historian, there is none more interesting to the student of medicine, than the history of his profession - In reviewing it, he sees theory after theory arising, and by turns swaying the sceptre of the medical world for a time, and finally passing away, leaving only the wreck of a name, and a remembrance of their once high reputation - These, although they have been abandoned, and are now regarded only as monuments of the ingenuity of their authors, teach us an useful lesson; they stand as beacons, warning succeeding generations, that the positions to which they

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lead, have been assumed, but have been found defective, and thence given up - Nor need we be surprized that so many revolutions in opinion should have taken place - In every art, or science, important improvements are the result of slow & patient investigation; and most frequently, of what may be called, negative experience - It very seldom happens, in the abstruse sciences, that correct principles are assumed at once - We are mostly led to the truth by wandering through a labyrinth of errors; "many observations must first be made, and the labour of much searching & examining gone through, before we can have proper materials to build on. Yet these are the hard conditions, upon which the knowledge of natural causes, is to be obtained" - These observations apply particularly to the science of medicine - Including within its comprehensive bounds, a more extensive range for contemplation of objects, than perhaps any other science; any thing like accuracy,

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or correctness of principles, must indeed be the result of "many observations", of "much searching & ~~experimenting~~". Accordingly we find, that as observations were extended, improvements were made in theory & in practice; that the phenomena of many diseases which could not be accounted for by preceding, were readily explained by succeeding theorists; and that of many diseases explained by the former, could be more satisfactorily explained by the latter. In this march of our science, centuries have rolled away, and we are still obliged to confess ourselves "miserably ignorant" in many particulars belonging to the profession. In reviewing the theories of some of the older writers, we cannot but admire the ingenuity with which they are propounded; but at the same time, we cannot but admit that they are vague & unsatisfactory; that they do not ~~& exist~~ lead directly to any correct or rational practice; & that they were altogether inadequate to the explanation of the phenomena of many diseases: hence much of the practice predicated thereon, must have border-

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closely on empiricism - "Theory is one thing, & practice is another" & theory can be of no use whatever, when it runs counter to, or does not lead to a correct practice - If then, in theorizing, we are compelled to make use of indefinite terms to effect our purpose, such terms must convey indefinite ideas, and we might just as well have no theory at all, as such an one; because, theory never did, nor never will cure any disease - — Simplicity is one of the grand characteristics of nature - The means she makes use of to produce the most complicated results, are few & simple, and may be easily comprehended, if we proceed no faster in our inquiries, than we have data founded upon observation, to proceed upon - But if we have not sufficient materials with which to proceed, we might just as well, (as respects real good resulting), confess our ignorance, and say we can proceed no farther, as to engage the imagination in framing terms to which we can affix no precise ideas, to bear us out of our difficulties -

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Luxuriance of imagination may befit the poet: but to the grave & reflecting philosopher belongs not flights of fancy - When he beholds Nature attired in her "loveliest array": or when he sees the majesty of Nature's God in storms, or "hears it in the wind" he is not transported on the wings of visionary fancy, beyond the bounds of Reason: he calmly surveys the scenery; he sees the effect & infers the cause: he considers the present appearances as only the effect of a greater cause "Tile step by step with an aspiring trod,

He climb from Nature, to the throne of God".

It is very judiciously remarked by Doctor Blake in his treatise upon pecceperal fever, that if medical writers had confined themselves more to observation, & depended less upon speculation, many diseases which are now reckoned amongst the opprobria medicorum, would have readily yielded to the resources of our art, and we, instead of beholding them at this late date, as enemies bidding defiance to our utmost endeavours to overcome them, should have had the satisfac-

tion of seeing them prostrate themselves before our means, and yielding themselves as trophies justly due the efficacy of the healing art — Fortunately for afflicted humanity, the period has arrived when observation is more depended on than it was formerly - The rage for fabricating new theories, prevails to a less extent now than formerly - The medical world seems now to acquiesce in the opinion, that a more strict observance of disease, or of diseased action, is necessary, in order to account for many morbid phenomena consistently with the present state of physiological science - It is found that many practical facts, are now, in the present state of knowledge, altogether incompatible with any of the old theories, or at least that they may be accounted for, more satisfactorily, consistently with later observations - If then, we thus go on, correcting theory by practice, & the contrary, we shall doubtless ere long be enabled to accomplish all that is placed with in the power of human skill to effect - Our science then, being founded on the firm basis of observation, & supported by the inscrutable

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test of experience, will hold her rank among her sister sciences, and shine among them as the brightest luminary in the constellation; other sciences have for their object only the convenience of man; our's his health, his life, his all. Let it be cultivated then as a tender plant; let it be cherished by Genius, supported by assiduous application, and it will not fail recompensing us for the labour we may bestow upon it — " —

That there are some diseases, particularly of the Lungs of a specific nature; diseases of the nervous system from mal-formation &c &c which can never be cured I am sorry that I am compelled to admit; but that these are more rare, than we are sometimes led to suspect, if the testimony of authors is to be credited, I am also as fully persuaded. Faithorn, Abernethy, Hamilton & others, furnish instances corroborating the fact; and the result of many cases which are to be found in various late works, show that the pathological views hitherto entertained, were entirely erroneous otherwise the practice which has cured, could never have saved the

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patients - A case in point here presents itself to my view.
A lady in Delaware County was attacked in 1820 with all the symptoms of Angina Pectoris, which disease, her complaint was pronounced to be by her physician, who is "equalled by few, excelled by none" in that nicety of discrimination, & correctness of practice, which constitutes the successful practitioner; and by a practitioner of this city, whose eminence & fame stands unrivalled in the medical world; they exhausted their resources & she was not at all benefitted - Her husband, being informed they could do no more for her, anxious to leave no means untried, that held out the least prospect of success, and having heard of some extreme cases which had been relieved by a Mr. Smith of this place, who professed to deal in Indian remedies, resolved to try whether he could relieve her, or not - Doct. Smith gave her a draught, which purged her severely; this he followed with another which acted as a powerful sudorific; & then gave her some vegetable tonic - The effect of this treatment was altogether surprizing - She was entirely relieved of her violent spasmodic pains in a few hours, & in a very short time she was able to come down stairs, perfectly well (except weak) & she remains well at this time - In this case it was the

joint opinion of her physicians, that ossification of the coronary vessels of the heart had taken place; but, that it had not must be admitted by all, otherwise medicine could never have brought relief. The early history of this case I am unacquainted with; but I think some light may be thrown upon the pathology of this singular disease (I allude to Angina Pectoris) - From its termination, we may I think, rationally infer that Angina Pectoris is, sometimes at least, a disease of sympathy. This doctrine is inculcated by Doct. Chapman in his lectures, and it will receive some support, if further be needed, from this - My opinion (says the able professor just quoted) is "that it is Gout of the stomach extending to the Lungs" - The subject of the case before us, is of a full plethoric habit, inclining to corpulency; and after she was attacked, the depleting plan was carried to its full extent; v. s. cathartics, diaphoretics &c &c were repeated at short intervals; & antispasmodics of every kind were used, but without avail - Now whether Doct. Smith's medicines would have had so good an effect in the early stage of this case, may admit of just grounds for doubt; but be that as it may, his remedies could never have reached her affection

had not its "first-link" been rivetted in the prima via - By his first draught he completely evacuated the alimentary canal, by causing the expulsion of large quantities of dark, foul faces; his second merely equalized the excitement of the system and the last braced up the weakened & relaxed fibres; the effect of which has already been stated - Again, we may also learn by its termination never to abandon our patient, under the idea of an incurable disease, so long as the lingering spark of life "cleaves to its frail tenement" -

In reflecting upon the nature & constitution of the animal economy, it appears to me next thing to impossible, to admit the idea, that any material constitutional affection other than such as be of a specific nature can take place ~~with~~ so long as the prima via is not deranged in its functions; and even specific diseases may in my opinion, be much modified in their effects, by a strict attention to these important organs - The great control they exercise over the whole system, is known to, and admitted by all - It is known that there is scarcely a symptom of any disease, but occasionally presents itself in different habits & temperaments, merely from costiveness, or constipation, and it

is also known that many of these symptoms will not subside by the mere evacuation of the bowels, or the removal of the exciting cause, although they would have been prevented by a prevention of the obstipatio - Nor need this be at all surprising, since the removal of an irritating cause from the surface, (as a vesicatory, a note from the eye &c) will not remove the consequent inflammation, although had they not have been applied inflammation had not taken place -

From the foregoing observations it will doubtless appear, that I am an advocate for the sympathetic doctrine of diseases - So far as I am capable of judging, it certainly appears to me, to be of more extensive application, and to lead to a more rational mode of practice, than any doctrine hitherto propounded - Who it originated with, I never have learnt, but we find its advocates daily increasing in number & respectability; and amongst them we find none more firm, nor who has done more towards placing it on its proper basis, than professor Chapman, of this school - That it is not to be received with some limitation, in our present state of knowledge, I do not assert; but it cannot but be admitted as fact, that improvements have been made, & are daily

making in practice which had never been hit on, by other doctrinists, and in the success attending the treatment of many diseases, which had hitherto mocked our art, we are taught the value of the innovation, and encouraged in the prosecution of the enquiries, which have already done so much for afflicted humanity -

Whether or no, it is customary in essays of this kind, to introduce many quotations from authors, substantiating opinions adduced, I know not; but I have deemed it unnecessary & consequently have confined myself to the bare mention of authors containing facts (at least stated as such) supporting my opinions. Did I deem it necessary, by a recurrence to Chapman's Therapeutics, Abernethy's surgical observations, Hamilton on Purgatives, Armstrong on Typhus Dorsey's Cooper, Dorsey's Surgery, and a variety of other approved, as well as many periodical works, I might swell my essay to a volume of no small size, by extracting cases, showing the efficacy of medicines directed to the stomach & bowels, in the treatment of many intractable disorders, as Epilepsy, Chorea, Hysteria, Tetanus, Pertussis Mania, Mania a' potu, Diabetes, Typhus fever, Chlorosis, Tic Doloreaux, Amaurosis, Marasmus, Inveterate ophthalmia, Gout, Morbus Coxarius &c &c - But instead of presenting my

readers, with an abstract of the writings of others. I have thought it preferable to present my own views of the subject, collected & arranged, after a careful perusal of their works.

It is ~~in general~~ confessed by all that diseases of the nervous system, are in general, classed among those that are most troublesome to the patient, and least under the influence of medicine. In inquiring into the history of them, of many diseases of this class, we shall doubtless frequently be undecided or wavering in forming an opinion concerning, or of referring their origin, to the primæ viæ; but in the language of a late very respectable author "were we uniformly attentive, to mark the bodily changes that attend, or precede, nervous affections, however trivial these changes may appear, we should then be enabled, knowing their foundation, or source, to afford effectual relief, in most cases of such disorders, which are at present so alarmingly afflictingly ~~to the patient~~, and often so inscrutable to the physician". It will in general be found, when we come to examine minutely, (as should always be done) into the history of such cases, and of many others which are not classed under "Neuroses", that a disordered state of the alimentary canal, was amongst the very earli-

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est of the symptoms; that it was so slight, perhaps as not to attract the attention of the patient particularly, until by its continuance, other more alarming symptoms have supervened, and the first slight indisposition has been overlooked or forgotten. That this is actually the case perhaps 9 times in 10 where no obvious cause can be assigned, I think may be asserted without danger of running counter to facts. Could this always be attained, or arrived at. But this is impossible in the very nature of things. It is a Physiological fact, that the ingesta of the system must bear a proper proportion to the ingesta: but this is not known, or thought of, by perhaps one person in 10 ignorant of the laws of the animal oeconomy; hence derangement, in this way, may take place and the patient not know but that all is right. Were every person acquainted with the Laws of Physiology, and more particularly with the Physiology of digestion, secretion, absorption & nutrition, we might then receive satisfactory information, on which to form our opinion; but so long as this is not the case, we must rest satisfied with the information we recieve; notwithstanding it be frequently vague & unsatisfactory, altho' given in the most

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frank & candid manner - Very soon after I commenced reading the "practice of medicine" I observed derangement of the first passages, given as a symptom of almost every disease, yet as it was mentioned as a consequent & not as a primary symptom, I was not led to attach any thing like primary importance to it - When however, by a prosecution of my studies, I had enlarged my views of disease, & of diseased action, I began to entertain a different idea of the subject, and my own daily observation, aided by the observations of others who have favoured the world with their views & treatment of disease, tended to convince me that my latter ~~opinion~~ comes much nearer the truth, as evinced in practice, than my former opinion -

It is remarked by the judicious Doct. Hamilton, that ~~if~~ authors in giving the symptomatology of diseases, should always commence with those symptoms, that first make their appearance - If this were particularly attended to by authors, much benefit, would most undoubtedly result to students; but in this point most authors "err sadly" - As an example - How much more satisfactory to a student, is the description, of that by no means uncommon, but very troublesome disease, Chlorosis given by Dr. Hamilton, than that by Dr. Thomas, who follows Cullen

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pretty closely in many particulars - "The cause of this disease (known likewise by the name of Green sickness) seems to be a want of power in the system, arising from weakness, to propel the blood into the uterine vessels, with a force sufficient to open their extremities, so as to allow a discharge of blood from them; but the origin of this peculiar weakness which appears at this particular period of life, we are wholly unacquainted with - Some have referred it to a certain state or affection of the ovaria, between which and the uterine vessels there is a seeming connexion" - His symptomatology is as follows - "Heaviness, listlessness to motion, fatigue on the least exercise, palpitation at the heart, pain in the back, loins & hips, flatulencies & acidities in the stomach & bowels, costiveness retention of the menses" &c &c -

Dr. H. observes "The slightest attention to the history of the disease evinces that costiveness precedes & accompanies the other symptoms. Costiveness induces the feculent odour of the breath, disordered stomach, depraved appetite & impaired digestion - These preclude a sufficient supply of nourishment, at a period of growth when it is most wanted; hence paleness, laxity, flaccidity, nervous symptoms, wasting of muscular flesh, languor, debility, retention of the menses

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He gives the symptoms as follows - "It is ushered in by disagreeable breath or exhalation from the mouth, not unfrequently of a faeculent odour, by acid ~~or~~ fetid eructations, by prostration & depravity of appetite with an aversion to usual food - These symptoms are preceded by costiveness which continues throughout the disease" "The complexion becomes pale & sometimes of a yellowish green the lips & Gums become pale, the eyes dull" &c &c -
Dr. Thomas ~~first quotes~~ makes the observation first introduced, & afterwards quotes Dr. H's pathology of the disease - It is plain therefore that Dr. T. did not hold with Dr. H. in his aetiology at least, or else he would not have said "the origin of the peculiar weakness &c we are wholly ~~un~~acquainted with" - It may appear presumptuous in me to dissent from Dr. T. in opinion, but perhaps the ~~opin~~ authority of Hamilton is not less than his, & I cannot but agree with the latter - I have myself had the good fortune to treat 3 cases of the disease successfully, & it was entirely with the views & practice of the latter gentleman, I attacked them & I found little or no difficulty in managing them - Again, it is a fact asserted by ~~the~~ Dr. H & admitted by Dr. T.

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that a prevention of costiveness, or an "assistance of nature where she is deficient, in keeping up a constant & regular alvine evacuation" will prevent the accession of the disease - What stronger proof then need we want of the locality of its origin?

Observations to the foregoing effect, apply to every disease of which Dr. H. treats - - Another practical fact here, perhaps may not be misplaced - It shows that irritation in the intestines alone, is capable of producing one of the most tremendous diseases humanity is liable to; I allude to Tetanus - Dr. Chapman in his MS. Lectures mentions a case which fell within his own observation - He mentions that he was called to a lad in Market street, & found him labouring under tetanus; he ascertained that he had been eating cherries; he removed a large quantity of the stones of this fruit from the rectum of the lad, and in the course of ½ an hour after (if I mistake not, I write from recollection) the boy was so well as to go home alone - If then such a cause is capable of producing such an effect, we may ask, what may it not produce? - Need we be at all surprised to find intestinal irritation, giving rise at times in different constitutions to any of the less violent symptoms which are

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met with in practice, when no obvious cause can be assigned. Is not the above a fact calculated for making a decided impression on the mind of every one who undertakes the management of disease? It points out the absolute necessity, of a strict attention to the prima via in every disease, and in every constitution -

Another case which fell within my own knowledge, I will here relate - Mrs. M was confined in the Spring of 1822 with her first child; she was delivered with instruments; or rather the operation of embryulcia was performed - For some months after, she was violently afflicted with pain of the left leg, extending from the hip to the toes, so severe as to incapacitate her from applying it to the floor - A great variety of means were employed by 2 or 3 County practitioners without affording any relief - Her husband applied to Dr. Humphrey, now of this City - He recommended Fowler's solution; after using it some time a most violent vomiting came on which lasted nearly 24 hours; it subsided, she immediately became convalescent, and soon got entirely well - This case might admit of considerable speculation; as. Whether it was the vomiting, or the impression of the arsenic on the system, or both conjoined, which effected the cure? This I shall avoid endeavouring to decide upon - I am however, inclined to believe from the appearance of the matter ejected &c. from her not having the least remission of pain &c before the vomiting took place that perhaps Tart. of Antimony might have produced

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the same effect. Although I am so strenuous an advocate for the removal of irritation from the stomach & bowels, I would by no means be understood as implying, that I would cure all diseases by simple vomiting & purging; On the contrary, no person can be more sensible than I am of the necessity of a nice discrimination & adjustment of other remedies to meet the indications which may present. Thus we bleed if the state of the system requires it; or we give stimulants, tonics, anti-spasmodics &c &c as may be required. What I would imply is, that a great variety of diseases proceed primarily from disorder of the first passages, & if we particularly attend throughout to their correction, we shall meet with much less difficulty in their management, than as if we go on prescribing for the other symptoms, without attention to these intimately concerned parts. And further it will be found, that a great many diseases to which the attention of the physician is called will yield immediately upon restoring the bowels to their regular functions; this I have observed myself in a number of instances. Even in Typhus Fever, a disease which of all others, we should a priori least be inclined to give purgatives in, we have ample testimony to their beneficial effects; and in many of the exanthemata, where the action of the system runs low & seems to tend to Typhus Dr. Hamilton

informs us he has used them, and "never witnessed sinking & fainting as mentioned by some writers & so much dreaded by them; neither have I observed a revulsion from the surface & a consequent premature fading, or in common language striking in of the efflorescence, from the exhibition of purgatives" - This fact being demonstrated in practice, may we not infer that the "fainting & sinking" depends upon the brain sympathizing with the alimentary canal, irritated by crudities, and propagated by the sympathetic nerves? -

That the stomach & bowels become deranged from a great variety of causes, is admitted by everyone: that other diseases are thus propagated will not be denied by many; but whether we should not in very many cases, where we can hardly suspect from any particular symptoms ~~example~~ ~~are~~ ~~there~~ ~~xxx~~ look beyond them for the material primary affection, is a question which may admit of some doubt - When we reflect on the peculiar structure of the Liver; on the very important utility of the fluid secreted by it, in carrying on the functions of the chylopoietic viscera, on the very great diversity of symptoms which have appeared in cases wherein post-mortem examinations have shown it to be the only viscus materially affected; and on the very frequent congestions &c which dissections have shown to exist at the terminations of a great

variety of diseases, I think we may infer that in the treatment of many, very many diseases, we can scarcely be too attentive in directing our remedies, so as to act, in part at least upon this organ - Its exceeding vascularity renders it highly liable to become deranged in its functions, and a derangement of its functions must of necessity derange the oeconomy of the system & disease must be the consequence - The causes affecting it are very various - as any of the more violent passions; suppression of perspiration; highly stimulating potations taken into the stomach, wounds on the region of the Liver or on distant parts - Thus Dr. Gibson in lecturing on abscess of this organ gave blows on the head as an exciting cause; protracted Intermittents &c &c - It is also observed by Armstrong that when the Brain is affected the functions of the Liver will usually be much disturbed at the same time - Many extracts from different works might be quoted to show that the liver is intimately concerned in the pathology of many diseases; but of its primary importance, authors do not seem to be decided; perhaps more observations are necessary. The remarks made by Dr. Hamilton, will here, perhaps apply, as forcibly as on the former occasion;

viz. that authors generally do not give the symptoms in the order they appear - Had this been particularly attended to, much less would remain to be done, at this date, in the advancement of the science, than now does -

Whether it be primarily or subsequently effected remains perhaps for further observations to determine - Speculatory arguments I have heretofore disavowed my intention of entering into, hence I shall dismiss the subject without farther notice — " — " — " — " — " — " —

The foregoing observations contain my views of the subject I have selected for my purpose - Throughout, my object has been to avoid prolixity - To unite perspicuity with conciseness has been my particular aim - Much more might have been written - Indeed it might have been extended to a volume of considerable magnitude; but the brief remarks contained have been deemed sufficient, to answer the purpose of an essay of this nature - That I have not done that justice to the subjects touched at, which they deserve, I feel a consciousness;

but inexperience must be my apology in a great measure

The subject is nearly new, and to treat it as it merits, requires profound judgment; ample experience; and much observation - In reflecting upon it in this light, I feel a consolatory hope that it will not be criticised so severely, as if it were the work of one better qualified, by those requisites, for the performance of so difficult a task - " - " - " - Since the foregoing was written, a very remarkable case fell within my observation, which I cannot but notice - On Sunday Sept. 15th Inst I was called to Mrs S. who had lost the power of speech since Saturday at 1 o'clock P.M. - On inquiring into the history of the case, I prescribed 20 grs Ipecac. & 3 of Tart. Ant. given at once. It operated very severely as an Emetic. I left 20 grs Jalap. & 10 of Calomel to be given in 4 hours after the operation of the Emetic - It also operated powerfully as a Cathartic, & on Monday on visiting her, I had the satisfaction of having answers from herself to my questions - I learnt that soon after the Cathartic began to operate, her power of speech returned But that she had been severely convulsed a number of times; this I attributed in part to the powerful medicines she had taken; I accordingly ordered some Laudanum given; The convulsions did not return, & she now remains in perfect health